



Progress Report
12/18/08

Seward and Carlisle
Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Development

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Committee

The Towns of Seward and Carlisle, located in Schoharie County, received jointly a planning grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYDAM) to work together to create an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan for each town. Each town has its own Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Committee. For efficiency's sake a Joint Executive Committee was formed. It is composed of members from each town committee. The Joint Executive Committee hired American Farmland Trust (AFT) as a consultant to help in the development of the plans. Laura Ten Eyck is AFT's field consultant working with the towns.

The Joint Executive Committee members are as follows:

Seward: Larry Phillips (Town Supervisor); Richard Bates; Peter Bent

Carlisle: Larry Bradt (Town Supervisor); Linda Cross; MacDonald Holmes, Michelle Linnane

Meetings

The Joint Executive Committee, along with Laura Ten Eyck from AFT, and Lee Pratt, Agriculture Marketing Specialist for the Schoharie County Planning Department began to meet this fall. The group has met once in October and once in November. The meetings are scheduled for the fourth Monday of each month and are held at the Schoharie County Planning Department office in Cobleskill at 7 pm. Minutes will be taken by a representative from the Schoharie County Planning Department.

The individual committees from each town will meet on an as needed basis as directed by their members on the Joint Executive Committee. Larry Phillips will be the liaison between the Joint Executive Committee and the Seward group and Linda Cross will be the liaison for Carlisle.

Communication

The primary means of communication will be e-mail, since all committee members are online. Laura will be responsible for sending out an agenda and minutes prior to each meeting along with other supporting materials.

Maps

At the November meeting the Joint Executive Committee reviewed maps created by the Schoharie County Planning Department of agricultural districts and soils in each town. The committee then reviewed the maps that were developed for the Town of Wright's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and discussed what type of maps they will need for Seward and Carlisle. This discussion will continue at the December meeting.

Inventories

Surveys of agriculture in each town have been essentially completed. However, some inaccuracies in the surveys were noted at the October meeting and each individual committee is in the process of making some corrections.

Interviews

At the December meeting the Joint Executive Committee will finalize each town's list of interview candidates. The text of a letter of introduction to be mailed to the interview candidates will also be finalized. The Schoharie County Planning Department will develop stationery for each town's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Committee.

They will print and mail the letters of introduction. Once the letters have gone out Laura will begin contacting the candidates to schedule interviews. At the December meeting the Committee will also work on developing a list of questions they would like Laura to ask during the interviews.

Public Meeting

At the December meeting the Committee will set a date for a public meeting in each town. The purpose of the public meeting will be to announce the development of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans, explain the process and receive public input. The meeting will be publicized by the committees and the County as much as possible to ensure good attendance from residents of the towns.

Comprehensive Plans

Carlisle has a Comprehensive Plan in place. A survey done during research for the development of the Comprehensive Plan will be analyzed as part of the information-gathering phase for Carlisle's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.

Seward does not have a Comprehensive Plan. They would like to work with the Schoharie County Planning Department to conduct a survey in Seward about what people envision for their town. This survey would be used in the development of a Comprehensive Plan. Input from the survey will also be used in the development of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.

Economic Impact of Agriculture

Lee Pratt, of the Schoharie County Planning Department, has arranged for the Schoharie County Cooperative Extension to provide data on agriculture production and farming's economic impact in Seward and Carlisle. The Committee hopes to have this information in January.

Regulation Review

As part of the process of developing the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, AFT will conduct a review of all local ordinances in the Towns of Seward and Carlisle. The goal of this review is to identify any areas in which local regulations may pose unnecessary restrictions on and challenges to agriculture. Although some town regulations are online some are not. The towns will provide Laura with copies of all of their miscellaneous local ordinances. The Schoharie County Planning Department will provide Laura with a hard copy of Seward's Zoning Law. Laura also needs a copy of Carlisle's Right to Farm Law.

Definition of Agriculture

At the November meeting the Committee began a discussion of the development of a working definition of agriculture to be used in the Plan. This discussion will continue at the December meeting. Laura handed out copies of the State Department of Agricultural and Markets agricultural definitions from the Agriculture District Law. She also distributed a copy of the Article 25AAA Farmland Protection Program for the committee members to read to assist in their understanding of what the state has in mind for Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans at the town level.

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